

White

NORTHERN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, TRANSITION FOR THE NORTH:

Recommendation for Change

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NORTHERN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: A NEW APPROACH

INTRODUCTION

The second annual seminar 'Environmental Implications of Northern Development' was held from March 9 - 14, 1980 at The Banff Centre by Resource Management Programs. In attendance were 30 participants representing a wide variety of occupations and backgrounds including federal, provincial, and territorial government departments and agencies, environmental and line managers from the petroleum, mining and hydro industries, consultants and representatives of public interest groups and northern communities.

The seminar was designed by Cliff White of Beak Consultants Limited, Calgary, in association with Mary Collins of Mary Collins Consultants Ltd., Calgary. David Rochefort of The Banff Centre, Resource Management Programs, provided the coordination and support for the seminar.

The objective of the five-day seminar was to familiarize the participants with the current 'state of the art' of northern resource development with a particular focus on the environmental issues related to such development. Resource persons from government, industry and public interest groups presented papers and participated in discussions providing the group with their views and visions of the political, technical and social issues facing the north. The conflicts involved in resource development were highlighted.

The seminar was divided into several sections, each dealing with a different part of the 'process' involved in northern development. Starting with an overview of the Natural Process, including the physical and biological resources of the north and the options for both renewable and non-renewable resource development, the group moved onto the Historical Process, examining the archaeological heritage of the north.

The Public Process included a study of policies and review procedures of the federal and territorial governments plus the role of the public and public interest groups in making decisions about resource management projects.

A role-playing exercise provided an opportunity for the participants to gain a better personal understanding of problems encountered in trying to resolve the potential conflicts in a resource development.

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Finally, the Industrial Process provided a review of the current status of transportation, mining and electrical generation of the north, culminating in a discussion of the future of the Western Arctic if petroleum exploration is successful and leads to production and transportation.

As part of the seminar, the participants were given the task of preparing a position paper which would suggest possible approaches for orderly and sensitive development of the north, taking into consideration the various interests and options they had been exposed to during the week.

The following paper provides a summary of the presentations made by the participants on the final day of the seminar. Two major areas of concern emerge. The first focuses on the need for a balanced approach to the social and economic aspects of northern life and the relationship to environmental considerations. The second concentrates on the need for a better system of decision-making for resource development in the north. One of the complaints heard throughout the week from all quarters was the lack of coordination between the many agencies and levels of government involved in resource development projects and the difficulty which developers or members of the public have in dealing with the complexities of the system. A number of ideas for streamlining the process, providing easier access to the regulatory system, and ensuring a comprehensive approach to northern resource development are presented in the paper.

It is the hope of both the seminar organizers and the participants that this paper will be both provocative and useful to others interested in and concerned about future resource development in the north. It is the synthesis of the views of a group of people who come with many differing attitudes and perceptions of the north. Some had many years experience in the north, while others were relatively newcomers to northern projects. All, however, worked, listened, debated and argued together for five days. The mental energy which was created was exciting and rewarding for all.

SMOOTHER TRANSITION FOR THE NORTH: RECOMMENDATION FOR CHANGE

Economic development in northern Canada for non-northern consumers is, in reality, an extension of what has been happening in southern regions of Canada throughout the past four centuries. It started with exploitation of cod off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland and gradually spread west and north with the harvesting of furs, timber and pulpwood, and the extraction of minerals and hydro-carbons. This in simplest terms can be described as the 'Staple Theory of Economic Growth' and is the economic nature of a resource development country such as Canada. This type of resource development occurs where resources are found in a given region and the demand for those resources is elsewhere or where technological changes give cause to transport the resource from the producing region.

This type of development inevitably results in change to the producing region. The obvious change could include: environmental modification, social adjustment or dislocation, development of political systems and economic development including urbanization and rising income.

The major difference between resource development in northern Canada and the rest of Canada is the relative time-frame over which development is occurring. Southern Canada has been adapting for about 400 years whereas similar change is occurring in a fraction of that time in the north. There are even major regional differences in the North; the Yukon and the Mackenzie Valley have had 100 - 150 years whereas the eastern Arctic has been forced to change over the last 40 years.

The usual pattern for change is influenced by four agents which occur in the following general order :

1. Explorers - these include both scientific and geographic explorers.
2. Missionaries - these lead to spiritual confusion among native peoples.
3. Government - this is the major change agent since it insists on supplying services which ties people to communities and introduces sophisticated social customs on an unprepared people.
4. Industry - resource development companies import new technology - e.g. company employees often insist on modern conveniences which greatly influence local peoples.

The north has great environmental diversity and its people have customs and beliefs which are as diverse as its climate. These plus the fact that the northern peoples are in various stages of adaptation preclude any suggestion that general solutions to the problems of the north are possible.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

In order to attempt to suggest solutions for smoothing the development process in northern Canada it is important to define the obvious effects of Northern Development from today's perspective. These are listed below as Advantages and Disadvantages with a very brief description of some for clarification.

Advantages

- Employment
- Higher cash income
- Improved transportation and communication
- Better education
- Sovereignty
- Improved housing
- Health care

Disadvantages

- Loss of traditional skills
- Loss of independence
- Weakened family ties
- Social stress
- Racial friction
- Alcohol and drugs
- Environmental change
- Financial dependency
- Cultural change

Education

While modern education in itself is a benefit and is essential for adapting to a modern Canadian lifestyle, it is also creating negative effects on northern cultures. It has contributed to the breakdown of traditional roles and has added to the erosion of family and community life. A severe generation conflict has developed. The youth on return from schools have a 'know it all' attitude and have far greater expectations than their elders. They have, through absence, lost the opportunity and desire to learn subsistence and survival skills, and often cannot even communicate with elders in a meaningful way.

Health

When the first outsiders visited northern Canada, they brought with them a variety of communicable and social diseases against which native peoples have a low tolerance. These have been largely overcome through introduction of modern drugs and active health programs. The result is that northern peoples have longer average lifespans and their infant mortality rate is down considerably. However, there are still development-related health problems in the north, such as diet. People who leave a subsistence lifestyle have a great deal of difficulty adapting to modern southern diets. They have also become targets for junk food counters in local food markets, resulting in a very real concern over poor nutrition.

Employment

While many native northerners are finding employment opportunities in the north, the unemployment rates are increasing as more and more young people mature and seek opportunities for employment in northern Canada. Many employment opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled workers are presently being filled by southern workers which could easily be filled by northerners if suitable training programs were established in northern Canada.

Transportation

There have been great improvements in transportation systems and methodology in northern Canada. While the benefits for these are obvious there are also disadvantages. Northern hunters now have easier access to hunting and fishing regions which were before largely inaccessible. The result is the overuse of natural resources in some regions.

Social and Cultural Change

Social stress comes from many development-related symptoms. Alcohol and drugs were introduced by explorers and these are very detrimental to native northerners who have low tolerance to narcotic substances. The introduction of a social welfare system to northern society has also had a grave effect on northerners since this has spawned an unnatural dependence on the state which, like alcohol, is very painful to sever. The issue of northern resource development itself, has divided communities and regions into opposing factions and has also contributed significantly to racial friction.

A major social adjustment which must be made by most northern peoples is that of adapting to a new lifestyle. Even something as simple as a house requires a tremendous learning experience for native peoples used to living in animal hide or snow houses. To those who have grown up in a wooden house this is a natural environment, but to a person who must change his life-long habits from one of nomadic existence to one of permanence, this can be very traumatic. A change in clothing can have a profound effect. People responsible for securing skins and manufacturing clothing suddenly find themselves with less to do and in a sense less needed. The adage that 'clothes make the man' holds very true and a noticeable personality change occurs when a native northerner adapts to modern light-weight clothing.

Another significant cultural change leading to confusion in the north in recent times is the loss of spiritual tradition from shamanism and polytheism to the monotheistic traditions of southern missionaries.

Environmental Change

The renewable resources in northern Canada are finite and are subject to wide natural fluctuations owing to seasonal variations. They therefore require careful monitoring and managing, especially during periods of abnormal seasonal stress. The hunter in the north on the other hand has become very efficient due to better killing technology, faster more efficient transportation and greater access.

These, coupled with the fact that the northern population is increasing very rapidly, are creating pressure on northern Canada's natural resources.

Decision-Making Process

The decision-making process in the north is transitory, confused and chronically duplicated; various governmental levels are often at cross purposes. Most of these problems exist because of the evolving nature of northern governmental legislative processes and a lack of a clear definition of jurisdictional boundaries. These clearly lead to a variety of problems for developers and for environmentalists, as confusion leads to a lack of cooperation and trust on all sides.

A recent inquiry into northern affairs had led to the publication of the Drury Report; adoption of this may lead northerners out of some of the problems they are presently facing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

It is obvious from history that it will not be possible to halt development in the north any more than it has been in the south. It should be possible, however, to smooth the process, if only the attitudes of cooperation, communication and consultation are allowed to play an active part in ongoing relationships. It was agreed by the seminar participants that it would be useful to make suggestions which could assist decision-makers in providing solutions for some of the problems identified in this paper. Some of these solutions are listed below.

Equity Sharing

It is considered important that northerners have a voice in resource development either through partial ownership of resources or through industry/native partnerships. Unless this happens, trust between various interest groups will be difficult to achieve.

Cooperative Management

Northerners must have an opportunity to share in the management of resource development. This could be accomplished by assimilating native workers into management teams and by providing management training programs in the north.

Government Assistance

It is necessary to curb indiscriminate social aid programs which are now prevalent in the north. An incentive program which encouraged skills training, such as a school for heavy equipment operators, would be preferable to present welfare programs.

Hunting Law Enforcement

While it is recognized that adequate hunting regulations are in place in the north, these appear to be poorly observed by many northerners. It was proposed that a solution to this problem might be to train native hunters and employ them as enforcement officers.

Decision-Making Process

The decision-making process in the north was considered by most of the participants to be the key element in providing a smooth transition in resource development for northerners. It was also concluded that present systems are clumsy and open to criticism by those most involved in northern development. The ideal decision-making system would have the following elements:

- more coordination in decision-making between industry, public, legislators and interested government departments;
- clear guidelines, mandate and responsibility;
- equal and open access to all those interested in northern development and environmental preservation;
- freedom of information;
- allocated efficiency, eliminating very quickly those concerns which are not valid;
- timely and prompt reviews and consideration of magnitude of projects;
- minimization of duplication;
- consultative and advisory function which coordinates but does not preempt existing agencies.

The participants have described what they believe could be a workable decision-making system. The name of this new agency would be The Territorial Resource Management and Conservation Secretariat. The agency would have the following mandate: 'To provide for the utilization, conservation and development of the lands of the Northwest Territories for the benefit of all Canadians and the residents of the Northwest Territories in particular'. This Secretariat would operate under the directorship of a Chairman to be appointed by Order in Council in consultation with all Government Departments vitally interested in Resource Development and

Environmental Conversation. The Chairman would operate at the Deputy Minister level and would have direct access to any Minister who might be involved in a development decision. His first responsibility would be to form a Secretariat consisting of a permanent group of advisors with discretionary powers to ascertain the level of effort and involvement necessary to assess a potential development. It is intended that this agency would provide a 'one window' approach to a developer. This would be accomplished by assigning a project manager from the Secretariat to each project. This person would then have the responsibility to interface with the developer and interested governmental departments and to expedite the process shown in the accompanying diagram.

The participants are hopeful that this process would take the adversary nature out of consultation, advice, regulation setting and monitoring and replace it with an atmosphere of harmony and trust. By taking out duplication which leads to frustration this process would get the most cooperation out of the parties involved.

It is important to emphasize that the Secretariat would be a facilitator and would not take the authority out of the hands of existing government departments. Decision-making and issuance of development permits would remain the responsibility of appropriate agencies. The multiplicity of legislative levels and overlap would remain for the present, but projects would be handled by an agency which knew the system and would therefore lessen time requirements. It is perceived that the Secretariat would receive input from government, industry and the public, and response from those vitally interested in development could be incorporated into a new system of decision-making in the north. It is hoped that this new creation would simplify development in the north and the rest of Canada.

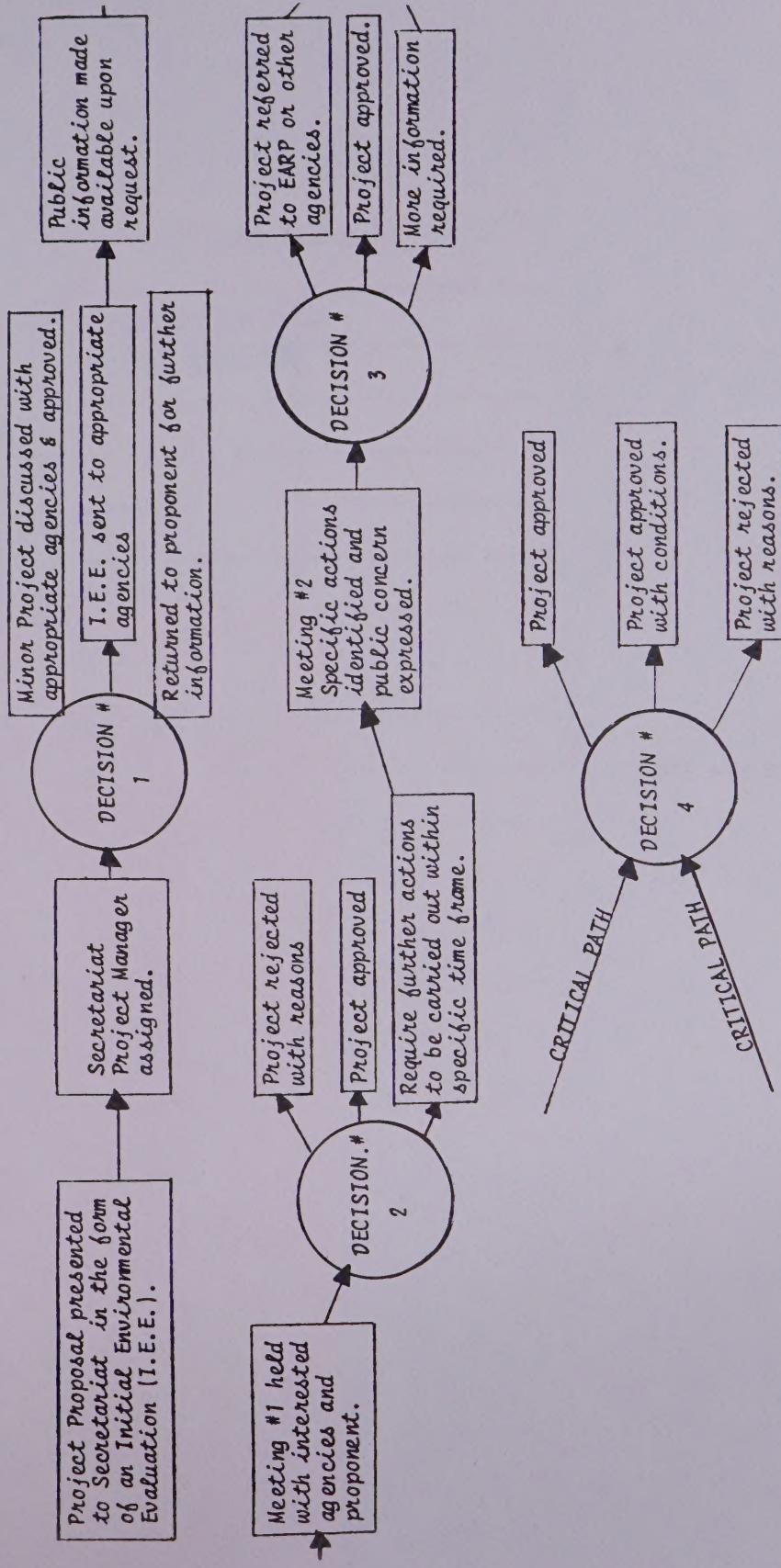
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the participants are not under the delusion that they have the answers to solve all the problems related to development in the north. However, it is hoped that this paper will be read and studied by northern legislators, decision-makers and those whose involvement with the north influences natural and social environments.

Prepared by Mary Collins and Cliff White for :
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